

**TV and Movies**

Posted on Mar 7, 2014

## How Kevin Spacey Is Bringing The "House Of Cards" Model To Shakespeare

The feature documentary *NOW: In the Wings on a World Stage*, about Spacey's theatrical production of *Richard III*, will open in theaters and will be available for digital download on May 2.



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Jeremy Whelehan



Kevin Spacey in *Richard III*.

Before he was terrorizing Washington, D.C. — and the weekend plans of Netflix subscribers — as Frank Underwood, Kevin Spacey was taking on the original amoral anti-hero in the title role of William Shakespeare's *Richard III*. And performing as Shakespeare's humpbacked power monger — with a penchant for directly addressing the audience — strongly influenced his *House of Cards* performance.

Now, things are coming full circle as Netflix's distribution of *House of Cards* has informed Spacey's effort to bring the experience of performing *Richard III* to a 21st-century audience.

Over the course of 10 months and 200 performances from 2011 to 2012, Spacey and a troupe of actors toured the world with *Richard III*, directed by Sam Mendes (*American Beauty*), as part of The Bridge Project, an endeavor to provide New York and London theater performers a chance to collaborate.

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Spacey commissioned a feature-length documentary about the experience, *NOW: In the Wings on a World Stage*, but he wanted to expand upon the usual approach of screening the movie at film festivals or debuting it on pay cable. Instead, *NOW* will be available for digital download (on [nowthefilm.com](https://nowthefilm.com), which is taking pre-orders for the movie) and will open in limited theatrical release on Friday, May 2, the actor exclusively told BuzzFeed.



Jeremy Whelehan



Sam Mendes (in background), Annabel Scholey, and Kevin Spacey rehearse *Richard III*.

The idea of offering viewers multiple options to see *NOW* was born from Spacey's conviction — confirmed by *House of Cards*' success — that audiences don't care about "platforms" anymore. "There are all kinds of ways in which people can discover film in whatever form it is in," he said. "They want great storytelling, and they want something that's satisfying. I think we've made a film that deserves to be seen theatrically, but I also am perfectly happy that people will be able to download it."

Distribution deals for independent films, especially for documentary features, can often prove to be less than friendly to the filmmaker or the film, something Spacey also wanted to avoid. "When you're in a movie and you're just an actor for hire, there are always times, particularly with smaller independent films, that you can sense that the audience is there," he said. "[The movie] is doing well enough in certain cities that if the studio just *pounced* at that particular moment and took out some ads and expanded it in some theaters, you know it would find a bigger audience. I've been in a number of movies where that has happened, and it worked. And I've been on a whole bunch of movies where nothing happened, and you get frustrated by the fact that you have no control. All of those ways to shift and adjust to what the audience is asking for is really incredible. It just means that I'm going to be able to, in a sense, have a much more direct relationship with my audience than I've ever had."





Jeremy Whelehan



A production of *Richard III*.

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That drive for a closer connection with his audience comes directly from what Spacey calls the "organic experience" of performing live theater. "I've often compared it to tennis," Spacey said. "If you went out eight times a week and played tennis, it would never be the same game. Yes, it's the same rules, but it's never the same game. And that's exactly what doing a play is like. It is *never* the same. It is evolving, it is growing, it is changing, it is moving."

That was especially true during the global tour for *Richard III*, which took the production to far flung theaters in Qatar, Singapore, Beijing, and Istanbul, each of which presented unique challenges. "We had all these doors that went on either side of the stage," Spacey explained. "In many theaters, like, door number three doesn't work, because that's where the pillar is; door number one doesn't work because that's where the proscenium arch is; door number four doesn't work, because that's a *wall*. And so, when we were on stage, even though all the actors would be told this and we would rehearse, quite often, when you were in the middle of a performance, you would forget which door you were supposed to go out of. So you would often see an actor open a door, and look and obviously see a wall or a post, and then they'd shut the door and open another one and then they'd go out that one. It was quite hilarious."

[View this video on Vimeo](#)

*Via vimeo.com*

But *NOW* will not be an insular look at the production of *Richard III* — a point Spacey makes with a kind of Frank Underwood flourish. "I did not set out to make a kind of pat-on-your-back, lovey, inside, you-had-to-be-in-the-show-to-enjoy-this-film home movie," he said. "I wanted to make an intimate, very revealing look at what it's like to be an actor in a company and why theater is so incredible. I think the film goes a long way to answering a lot of those questions."

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**Check out this exclusive reveal of the poster for the film:**





Courtesy Kevin Spacey



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